DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 025 207 HE 000 207

By- Renaud, Harriet

The Climates of Change.

California Univ., Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education.
Pub Date 67
Note- 4p.; Article in The Research Reporter; v2 n4 1967
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30
Descriptors- Attitude Tests, *Higher Education, Intellectual Development, *Motivation, *Parent Influence, Parent Role, Parents, *Personality Change, *Students, Testing

There is increasing evidence that significant personality changes take place during adolescence and early adulthood. Among 10,000 high school seniors tested, the group intending to go to college differed in ability, socioeconomic background, parental encouragement, academic motivation and attitudes from those going on to jobs or homemaking. Students who spent 4 uninterrupted years in college became more intellectual and developed a critical, flexible, nonjudgmental type of thinking whereas few students in the employed group made such changes. Experiences in college seem to nourish greater growth in intellectuality and autonomy when the potential for such growth exists. And a student's potential for growth is largely determined by parental influence early in life. Thus, because parental influence is the student's strongest motivation factor to remain in college, ways should be found to help instill this motivation when parental support is missing. A strong case may be made for counseling to begin in the earliest grades and continue throughout the entire educational experience. (CS)

THE CLIMATES OF CHANGE

by

Harriet Renaud

ED025207

ED025207

HE000 207

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

he Climates
f Change

til fairly recently, most social scientists tended to view per-
ality development in college years largely as a manifesta-
n of important directions taken early in childhood. Lately,
wever, there has been a growing emphasis on the view that
hough the effect of early environment is critical, there is
ential for change and growth at all stages of life, particular-
n adolescence and early adulthood. This view is being sup-
ted by a growing body of evidence that important and
tematic personality changes take place during college.
An exploration of personality development as demonstra-
by measured value change constitutes a major focus of
yond High School, a recent report by James W. Trent and
and L. Medsker of the Center for Research and Develop-
nt in Higher Education. In a multi-faceted longitudinal
dy, they report not only how some 10,000 high school
duates dispersed themselves among their various pursuits
obs, homemaking, or college—but how the values and at-
des the graduates brought to these activities changed dur-
the four years following high school.

As high school seniors, the college-bound group and the
ng people who were to take jobs immediately after grad-
ion were quite markedly distinguished by differences in
ity, socioeconomic background, parental encouragement,
academic motivation. And they also differed in attitudes
measured by the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI).
while there were indeed statistically significant differ-
es between the groups who went on to college or employ-
nt, for both men and women, on the OPI scales which mea-
e inclination toward reflective, abstract thinking, inde-
dence, and flexibility (the Thinking Introversion, Non-
horitarianism, and Social Maturity scales), there was no
erence between the groups of men in the measured extent
their intellectual curiosity or tolerance for ambiguity (the
nplexity scale). Differences on the Complexity scale did
ear, however, after exposure either to college or employ-
ment. And other differences between the groups, already existing at the time of high school graduation, became even more apparent four years later.

How are we to "unpack" the meaning of such a finding? Was it the graduates' pursuits after high school that played the critically defining role in their development? Or were the important variables in their development the personal and background characteristics that led them into one path rather than another? The data speak to these issues, both by providing answers and sharpening the questions about the components of change in human development.

The key word is, of course, "change." It is clear from the data that the students who spent four uninterrupted years in college (persisters) changed more than their peers with four years of job experience (nonattenders) by becoming more intellectual and particularly by developing the critical, flexible, nonjudgmental kind of thinking assessed by measures of autonomy. And the pattern of differences both in intellectual disposition and development of autonomy between the two groups held firm even for those matched for ability and socioeconomic background.

The college persisters as a group became more inclined towards reflective, abstract thinking, independence, and flexibility, with the women among them showing greater gains in intellectual curiosity, tolerance for ambiguity, freedom from opinionated thinking, and autonomy. And the nonattenders as a group showed either decreases or less growth than the persisters on the scales measuring these traits, with women who had four years of unbroken "homemaking" showing the greatest regression—even more than the employed women—on the Complexity scale, which assesses interest in intellectual inquiry and tolerance for ambiguity (Figure I). Men with four years in employment responded to their experience much as women with four years in the home did—with an increasing closed-mindedness and inflexibility.

Although the college students' positive changes in the direction of interest in ideas and abstract thinking were statistically significant, their development in independence, flexibility, and freedom from opinionated thinking was dramatic The data gathered from one of the measures of autonomy, the Nonauthoritarianism scale, make graphic the direction

FIGURE I
Change on Complexity Scale from 1959 to 1963
by post high school activity

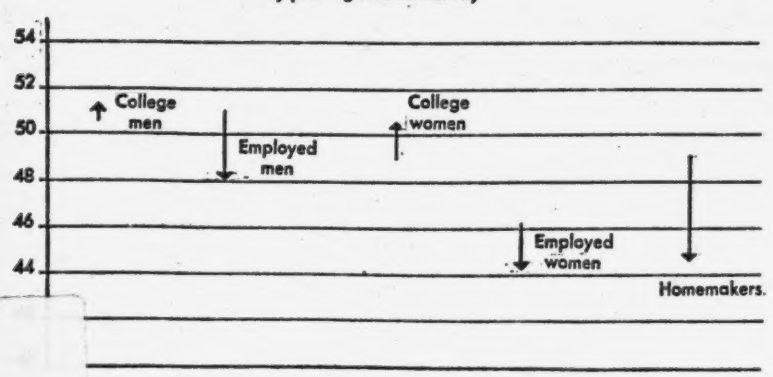
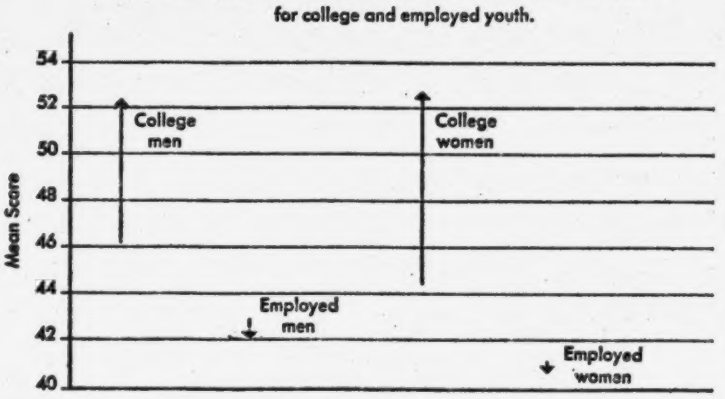


FIGURE II
Change on Non-authoritarianism Scale from 1959 to 1963
for college and employed youth.



nd extent of change on this dimension that took place in the wo groups of young people who spent the first four years fter high school in quite different ways.

At the time of high school graduation, the mean difference n Nonauthoritarianism scores between those who expected o attend college and those who planned to take jobs was a ittle over 3 standard points. Four years later, the mean dif- ferences had spread to 10 points, the college men's scores having increased by 6 points, the employed having decreased by 1. The women's pattern of change was comparable, with the mean difference between the two groups even more pronounced: The spread between the college and employed women became 12 points, the college women having increased by 8 points, the employed changing almost not at all (Figure II).

Although both men and women in the employed group did make changes, some of them statistically significant, they were not very large in themselves, and certainly not large compared with changes made by the college group. On the whole, the greater changes were made primarily by the students who remained in college. The Trent-Medsker study suggests that change takes place in response to a variety of experiences—but that it seems to be experiences in college which nourish greater growth in intellectuality and autonomy when the potential for such growth exists.

This major finding—that there were significant differences between young people in college and their noncollege peers, both with respect to the direction of change and to the amount of change—strongly suggests that important clues to the correlates of change lie in the interaction of the student with the college environment. This view gains support from the fact that the patterns of differences in intellectual disposition between the two groups, apparent when they were in high school, became more clearly defined four years later, with the same general pattern found at all ability and socioeconomic levels. Thus, since neither ability nor socioeconomic background adequately explains why some young people stay in college and others do not, what factors are more importantly involved in persistence in college? A variety of analyses of questionnaire responses attempt to break down the causes of motivation to remain in college, and one of the findings of the study is that this motivation appears to be extensively derived from parental influence early in life.

Changes took place during the college years for dropouts also, and by studying the young people in their sample who withdrew from college within three years, the authors show that the amount of change was greatest among college persisters and least among nonattenders. The scores of withdrawals fell consistently between the other two groups, as they had at the point of high school graduation. At that time, the future dropouts, as a group, were lower in ability and socioeconomic background than the persisters, and less intellectual and autonomous. Most important, perhaps, was the finding that they reported less parental encouragement to attend college, such encouragement having been established as a major component of academic motivation.

It is of interest that the high school seniors of high ability who entered college and later withdrew, including those who attended college for one year or less, were much less intellectually disposed than the persisters and evidently had a "drop-out set" even before they sampled what college had to serve; on graduating from high school, only 18 percent of them thought it "extremely likely" they would graduate from college, whereas 43 percent of the persisters had this definite an expectation.

Certainly some dropping out is temporary, plainly salutary, and constitutes a period during which financial or psychological resources are regrouped and recharged. But most in this sample who left college neither returned within the period of the study nor indicated that they were engaged in any highly satisfying activity. They described themselves as vocationally unprepared and generally dissatisfied with their vocational status, and their scores on the measures of attitudes, values, and change aligned them more closely with the employed group than the college persisters.

Since the persisters, withdrawals, and the employed differed in the extent to which they were motivated to pursue higher education, and since the data indicate that change in values and attitudes was related to exposure to college, it seems clear that one challenge is to find ways to help instill educational motivation when parental influence in this area is missing. It is not yet known to what degree parent-surrogates such as teachers and counselors can compensate for culturally and intellectually deprived familial atmospheres. But a strong case can be made for counseling to begin in the earliest grades and continue through the entire educational experience. The Trent-Medsker data suggest that even the seeking out of counseling depends on the expectation, based on family experience, that adults are to be turned to for guidance and information. The greatest proportion of young people in the sample who reported getting advice from parents and discussing college with them, also reported making most use of counseling. As one nonattender put it, "All the kids you already knew were going to college were the ones you always saw talking to the teachers and counselors."

The factors of educational motivation which are evidently such a propelling force toward persistence are inseparable from what the authors refer to as a "predisposition" to change. The motivational factors were discussed in "Beyond Ability." a report in the *Research Reporter* 2(1), 1967, on an earlier Medsker-Trent study. It is the creation of this predisposition which is urgently needed if higher education is to fulfill its role in developing human potential. But the changes, whether positive, negative, or simply a consolidation of existing traits, seemed also to some degree to be a response to environmental claims and mores.

For the young employed, who entered the world of the machine and the filing cabinet, the relatively static condition or even regressive direction of their change, suggests that the environment did not provide them much opportunity for developing wider interests or working with stimulating peers, or realizing their potential for living a richer life. The authors suggest that, "regression...may operate in social milieus in which independence, autonomy, and tolerance are not viewed as desirable traits." It has also been frequently observed that those who come to resemble the college environment are more likely to remain in it than those who do not, and the college persisters under study changed in the direction of increased intellectuality, flexibility, and autonomy—traits frequently

mentioned in college bulletins, prized by college peers, and recognized by faculty. They were also increasingly ready, as their scores on the Social Maturity scale bear witness, to respond to the moral and cultural tone of the college environments. They became less judgemental and punitive and more interested in the intellectual and esthetic, with the men's change scores on this scale varying by ability level from 8.7 to 11.0 (the employed men's varied from 2.4 to 4.1).

The study of the encounter between the individual and the environment is, of course, the study of the relationship between the "predisposition" of the student and the opportunity presented by the college. The Trent-Medsker data strongly indicate that if higher education is to perform its function of liberating students to realize their best potentials, it must have students predisposed to change in the directions of flexibility, objectivity, and intellectuality—but it must also create, on college campuses, environments to which the readiness for change and growth will respond.

HARRIET RENAUD

The study on which this report is based may be obtained from the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education. (Price: $3.00)

Catholic Higher Education Probed

The state of higher education under the auspices of the church has been studied intensively for the past decade. Catholic Historian John Tracy Ellis has written: "In some instances this scrutiny has done a disservice to Catholic colleges and universities, either because writers, Catholic or non-Catholic, have exaggerated the weaknesses of these institutions or because Catholics, prompted by their defensive attitudes, have falsified the true situation in the mistaken view that any criticism was a manifestation of hostility." According to Ellis, *Catholics in College - Religious Commitment and the Intellectual Life* by James Trent of the Center staff shows "an awareness of both extremes, and he has sought —with a good measure of success in my opinion—to remedy their defects by resting his case on the solid ground of demonstrable facts."

One of the unique features of the book is that it explores personality development and value changes of college students of different religions and socio-economic subcultures over a period of 4 years. The work is based on empirical data from comparative studies of Catholic students who attended Catholic colleges, Catholic students attending non-Catholic colleges, and non-Catholic students attending mostly secular colleges. The study goes beyond survey analysis to probe the personality development of the subjects over the college years with a variety of scales, including those from the Omnibus Personality Inventory, which have been used to measure emotional, intellectual, and religious dispositions of college students.

This comprehensive study reveals that, in general, the Catholic college students comprising the cross-country samples in the study are relatively uncommitted intellectually, docile, closed-minded, and unimaginative when compared with the non-Catholic college students observed. Catholic students who do manifest an intellectual orientation are also much more critical or liberal in religious orientation when compared with their less intellectual peers.

The research scrutinizes background, educational, and personality factors associated with intellectual development, and the relationship between intellectual and religious values and behavior. Catholic students, Trent found, could be divided into three types—the "critical devout," "the defector," and "the nonintellectual."

The author presents documentation that raises questions such as: What characteristics differentiate Catholics who attend Catholic colleges? How do the students attending Jesuit institutions compare with Catholic students attending other Catholic institutions? What is the effect of intellectual commitment on the religious life? What does it mean to be a Catholic intellectual?

Trent criticizes as "wasteful" the proliferation of small, fragmented Catholic colleges which neglect their chances to become centers for liberal and creative arts. In pointing out new directions which could be taken by Catholic colleges, he discusses cooperative cluster college systems among Catholic colleges or among Catholic and Protestant colleges, and the role Catholic colleges could play in innovating and development in higher education.

Signs of openness are evident not only within the church itself but in the church's colleges, presumably the prime movers in its intellectual life, the study indicates. The author feels that, if the rights steps are taken, there is a possibility for a long overdue intellectual awakening for Catholics.

The book, written with Jenette Gold, is available through the University of Chicago Press.

Catholics in College - Religious Commitment and the Intellectual Life. Foreword by John Tracy Ellis. 351 pp. plus index. $9.00 - The University of Chicago Press.

Center Studies Curriculum Models

Dr. Joseph Axelrod, on leave from San Francisco State College to serve as visiting research educator at the Center this year, is directing a project entitled, "Model building for undergraduate colleges: an investigation of problems related to the development of new colleges and the reform of existing ones."

Looking back upon his own experiences as college teacher and administrator, Axelrod recounted some of the frustrations involved in "curricular reform." "As an administrative officer," he said, "I was concerned with reforming only the structural elements of the curriculum—the organization of course sequences, the system of scheduling classes, the formal grading system. But the 'system' didn't allow me to get at the total picture. I was dissatisfied, for my experience as a classroom teacher had led me to realize that the structural elements were not the whole of curricular design. Indeed, the structure of the curriculum, isn't even 'real'; it's merely a set of potentials waiting to be realized."

The realization or actualization of the structural design is accomplished through a set of elements that are so rarely studied in any systematic way that, Axelrod commented, "they don't even have a name!" Since they serve to "implement" the structure, he terms these elements "implemental elements"—for example, what roles the instructor takes, how he provides a "model" for inquiry and learning, what sorts of assignments are given in the course, how testing and grading are carried out, and the range of student experiences, etc.

Axelrod believes that a possible reason for the erosion of many innovations after 4 or 5 years is that the reform affects a structural element only. His work at the Center will investigate the hypothesis that "when any single element